



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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occupied the chair, and briefly introduced the lecturer, Mr. B. D. Turner, M.A., who took as his subject: "Education on its physical side." Physical exercise, he said, is of two kinds—(1st) that which trains hand and eye to work together as when we ply a craft for hours on end; (2nd) that which makes the heart beat quicker and sets the pulses bounding, as physical exertion does. Thus the physical training should have two ends in view—(1st) it should train the eye to dictate to the hand or foot; (2nd) it should supply a reason why the child should run about. *Field Sports*—fishing, riding, shooting, and the like, are the best way of exercising a boy's body. They bring him face to face with the facts of nature, which plays its game without allowance made for human weakness. Thus he learns to endure hardness, and to do battle, as with a foe. Where field sports are out of question *Games* are of importance; they give exercise, but they do more, they teach readiness of eye and hand and foot; they teach hardiness, not to mind knocks or weather; they require co-operation; they implant the habit of exercise; they teach both how to govern and how to obey. Gymnastics, the favourite form of exercise in Germany, as in girls' schools here, though it may straighten the body, is otherwise defective as training. Cricket or football the lecturer strongly recommended; they are the best games to encourage pluck, readiness, co-operation, and habits of discipline. But, besides playing football regularly, each boy should have a hobby to pursue at home. The want of such a hobby is very marked among men educated at public schools, yet such a hobby might be the saving of many a lad at the turning-point of his life. Some discussion followed. Mr. Turner cordially agreed with the President's remark that an interest in out-door games gives boys something to talk about, and prevents much idle and improper conversation. Mrs. Greig, the hostess, in a few well-chosen words, expressed the interest felt by all in the admirable address so kindly delivered by Mr. Turner.

FARNWORTH.—A drawing-room meeting was held on February 15th, by kind permission of Mrs. Harold Barnes, at Limefield. Mrs. Wright, of Wallasey, gave a little account of the working of the branch there, and spoke of the great help to parents the Union would prove. After this there was a discussion on "Bicycling for girls," and it was agreed that with a good, suitable saddle, and moderation in speed and distance, bicycling is good even for growing girls. Several new members joined the branch at the close of the meeting.

COLCHESTER.—A meeting of the Educated Mothers' Union was held in the Library of Colchester Castle, and by the kind permission of Mrs. Round, a most interesting address was given by Mrs. Steinthal, on the Parents' National Educational Union. It had been hoped that a branch would then have been formed, but owing to the absence of Mrs. Round, as representing the Educated Mothers' Union in Colchester, it was considered advisable, although there was considerable interest displayed, to postpone the formation of a branch until the next meeting of the Educated Mothers' Union.

THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

OBEDIENCE;

OR

THE PLACE OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE
IN EDUCATION.

BY T. G. ROOPER, M.A., H.M.I.

"Obedience for its own sake is the worst of vices."—*Headmaster at the
Headmasters' Conference.*

FOR a most amusing description of disobedient children no better reference can be found than Acton Bell's novel, "Agnes Grey," and more especially the following graphic scene, when the heroine was a sorely tried governess in Mr. Bloomfield's family:—

"I particularly remember one wild snowy afternoon after my return in January; the children had all come up from dinner, loudly declaring that they meant 'to be naughty,' and they had well kept their resolution, though I had talked myself hoarse and wearied every muscle in my throat in the vain attempt to *reason* them out of it. I had got Tom pinned up in a corner, whence I told him he should not escape till he had done his appointed task. Meantime Fannie had possessed herself of my work-bag and was rifling its contents—and spitting into it besides. I told her to let it alone, but to no purpose, of course. 'Burn it Fanny,' cried Tom; and this command she hastened to obey. I sprang to snatch it from the fire, and Tom darted to the door. 'Mary Ann, throw her desk out of the window,' cried he: and my precious desk containing my letters and papers, my small amount of cash, and all my valuables, was about to be precipitated from

the three storey window. I flew to rescue it. Meanwhile Tom had left the room and was rushing down the stairs, followed by Fanny. Having secured my desk I ran to catch them, and Mary Ann came scampering after. All three escaped me and ran out of the house into the garden, where they plunged about in the snow, shouting and screaming in exultant glee. While I stood just without the door, trying by grim looks and angry words to awe them into subjection, I heard a voice behind me in harshly piercing tones, exclaiming, 'Miss Grey, is it possible? What in the devil's name can you be thinking about?' 'I can't get them in, sir,' said I, turning round and beholding Mr. Bloomfield, the father of the three hopefuls, with his hair on end and his pale blue eyes bolting from their sockets. 'But I *insist* upon their being got in,' cried he, approaching nearer and looking perfectly ferocious. 'Then, sir, you must call them yourself, if you please, for they won't listen to me,' I replied, stepping back. 'Come in with you, you filthy brats; or I'll horsewhip you every one,' roared he, and the children instantly obeyed. 'There, you see, they came at the first word.' 'Yes, when *you* speak.' 'And it's very strange that when you take care of them you've no better control over 'em than that.'"

Who that has had the care of children without possessing that liking for them, which is said to be an acquired taste, does not sympathise with poor Miss Grey? And yet, although this young lady, possessed as she was of great ability and a trenchant faculty of observation, and also fortified with some philosophy of education, met with such disastrous failure, many good-natured unsophisticated girls of only twelve or thirteen years would have reduced the lively trio of juvenile anarchists to happiness, good temper and good order without the slightest consciousness of having done anything at all remarkable. These are facts of common experience. What is the explanation of them? Perhaps the power of securing obedience is a divine gift, and it may be that no explanation of it can be given. This, at any rate, was the opinion of him who among the Athenian commanders most deserves the title of scholar and gentleman.

"Men differ greatly," wrote Xenophon, "in respect of fitness to rule. One captain of a ship, for instance, will bring his men into port, after a long day's rowing, full of good

humour and mutual congratulations in spite of being exhausted by their work, and bathed with perspiration. Another will put into port after accomplishing only half the distance, his men hardly breathed by their exercise, and yet grumbling, discontented, and full of hatred to their captain. So, too, in the army there are generals who can neither get hard work out of their men nor inspire them to face danger, and whose company take to themselves credit for disobeying orders, instead of feeling the disgrace of it."

"There are other generals," continues Xenophon, "divinely great and excellent, who secure willing obedience, and whose men are prepared to go through fire and water with them, regarding good discipline as the highest honour, and the opposite the deepest disgrace. Their men may be relied upon for working their hardest whether alone or as one of a company. It is the same in civil affairs," he adds, "success in business accrues not to him who relies on rewards and punishments, but rather to him whose serene presence stimulates the workmen to energy, perseverance, and cheerful obedience. Let us reserve," he says, "our admiration for the master whose men if they catch sight of him are spurred on to mutual rivalry and burn with ambition to excel. Such a man," says Xenophon, "has something of the kingly character in him, and I am not sure," he says, "that it is possible for anyone to learn this art by seeing it done or by hearing about it, for I do not believe that this faculty of obtaining willing obedience is entirely human, but I rather think it is divine, and that God grants it to those who are initiated in true wisdom, whereas the exercise of despotism over men against their will is an office which they reserve for those whom they consider worthy to live the life which Tantalus is said to live in hell, fearing a second death."

Now it may be that as regards the art of control, whether of children or of men, there is no theory which will completely match the practice, but as the power to secure obedience lies at the root of all efforts to train children, prudence commands some critical study of those teasing and tantalising problems which present themselves to all, and trouble the thoughtful and conscientious few. "I find no difficulty in securing obedience from my children," says one. "And what is your counsel?" "It is just this. Suppose my little boy is playing

in the drawing room, I tell him, 'you may play as long as you're good.' He begins to be naughty. I ring the bell; the nurse comes down and the boy goes up. He forfeits the pleasure of my company. The plan is simplicity itself." "Implicit obedience," says another, "that is my system. I will have that and nothing less. Miss Grey's mistake was reasoning with her charges. As to her Tom, she should have thumped him with the back of a hair brush, and all that scene would have been avoided. Reasoning! the only argument a boy understands is the persuasive penny cane." Implicit obedience—well, the most perfect examples of implicit obedience and prompt execution of an order are to be found in war. The philosopher, like the dramatist, may be permitted to pass at once from the nursery to the battle-field with abrupt transition. Here is a description of the behaviour of thoroughly well disciplined German troops when reduced to terrible straits in the Franco-German war:—

"It would be impossible to overrate the conduct of the two German regiments, which, with failing ammunition, with companies and drafts of companies dispersed or intermixed, under the eye only of subordinate leaders, delivered their fire as carefully and in as absolute compliance to orders, as if they were on the rifle ranges in peace time. For two days they had been on outpost duty in contact with the enemy, and they had eaten no food save what they carried in their haversacks. During the day of battle they had been marched backwards and forwards in heavy country, and mostly in retreat under fire, and now at three o'clock, almost physically exhausted, they had to stand for two hours on the defensive. The men were so absolutely worn out that, as an officer of the regiment relates, the repulse of the French was followed by no cheer, no outspoken expression of triumph; the men sank down, and leaning with their backs against any support available, gazed blankly before them, or even slept; but on the call to meet the renewed assault, every man roused himself from his lethargy, and awaited in perfect silence the next order to fire. Never has there been finer illustration of real discipline than that afforded by the battalion officers, the non-commissioned officers and the rank and file of the 38th brigade at the battle of Beaune-la-Rolande."

No one can doubt that there are occasions in life when a

training in the practice of implicit obedience, of prompt unreflecting blind execution of orders is vital. A little child who has run out into the roadway, and is in imminent danger of being run over, would be saved from that fate if he were prompt in obeying his mother's orders, "Come here," instead of being in the habit of loitering and enquiring. Shall we then rest satisfied with this principle of training, and accept it as solid rock on which to erect the superstructure of the child's character? Curiously enough, an incident in the same battle makes us doubt whether the principle of unreasoning obedience is quite complete by itself. A small force of Germans, inside Beaune, a mere handful, were being hard pressed by the development of a concentrated attack upon them of some dozen battalions of the French 20th Corps. Suddenly there appeared, as if to their rescue, Captain Feige, with a small additional force. Captain Feige, had however received orders to march through Beaune, and pass on to a meeting-place on the other side of the village, and even while he entered the village he received a second order to proceed to this destination without delay. Captain Feige, however, on learning the state of affairs in the village, determined to disobey the twice repeated orders which he had received, and to remain in the village to strengthen the scanty force available to meet the French attack, and he adhered to his decision in spite of receiving a third order. The French attack was decisively repulsed, and unstinted and in unmeasured terms is the commendation bestowed upon Captain Feige by the historian of the event for accepting the responsibility of disobeying orders. There seem then to be occasions even in military affairs when disobedience to orders is commended, and implicit obedience discountenanced. Let me return from the scene of war to the nursery. A father one day, according to a story which I heard from the lips of Mr. Spurgeon, lifted his little boy of four years old into his arms, and carried him into the garden to amuse him with the sight of the flowers. Hearing himself called, the father hurried away to see what was wanted, first setting his baby boy down on the doorstep, and bidding him to sit there till he came back. Business, however, absorbed the father's attention, and he left home for the day, forgetful of his little son on the step. In the evening on his return he found the little fellow

still seated where he had placed him in the morning, never having stirred the whole day. Is this state of mind, I mean the state in which such implicit child-like obedience is possible, one which is desirable? Ought we to wish to establish in the child a spirit of blind unreasoning obedience to orders such as is essential to military discipline? We all depend upon each other. We are not like so many Robinson Crusoes living on lonely islands without even a man Friday. Human society is not a mere aggregate of individuals, and in mere self-protection ostracises those whose individuality and self-assertion are inconsistent with social life. Men must live a large part of their lives in obedience to usage and conventional rules, for otherwise there would be no society. Social life would be impracticable. But there is a difference between the kind of obedience which is necessary for a member of ordinary society and that required in the army, corresponding to the difference between social and military life. A unit of an army is not exactly like the unit of a state. A man may be, and I think ought to be, a unit of the national army as well as a unit of the nation, but the discipline of the army is one thing, and the discipline of society is another. In an army you look for its perfection in its value as a fighting machine. An army is a weapon of war.

Human action must consequently be simplified and reduced to its simplest terms. Army discipline is not merely a set of regulations designed to preserve order among a vast array of men. Army discipline is the result of long-continued habit, which makes the very muscles of the soldier instinctively obey the word of command, so that under whatsoever stress of circumstances, danger and death, he hears that word of command even though his mind be too confused and astounded to attend, yet his muscles obey. The discipline of social life is, however, of a much more complex character than this muscular obedience, for the reason that the aims of social life are manifold and diverse, while the aim of military life is single and concentrated. When the aim is single, the means to it are comparatively simple, and when you know exactly what you have to do, there is less difficulty in finding the means to do it. But the aim of social life is not simple. It may be made to appear simple. It may, for instance, be stated that the aim of social life is to make men lead a good life. Complexity, however, enters into the question as soon

as we enquire what is the good life. The members of a social community, say a club or a large school, are apt to be very exacting in their insistence upon conformity to the smallest details of its usages. The members of it who live in obedience to rules of life thus enforced, obey laws which do not depend upon reflection, but only upon imitation. The consequence is that they may easily reach a stage when their conventional habits are wholly independent of their hereditary temperaments and faculties. Suppose that a man in this stage happens to be separated from the society in which he has grown up and all its conventional restraints. What surprises are in store. What unexpected revolutions of character take place. The economist becomes a spendthrift, the courteous become selfish, the considerate become cruel, and occasionally the perfect gentleman appears in a new character as the perfect blackguard. More than this, natural aptitudes are obscured and remain undeveloped amid conventional restraints. A possible worker for the advancement of science in consequence of social pressure may become a commonplace athlete or sportsman. For the same reason a man of mere muscle may become a clergyman or a lawyer, and a post which requires energy and confidence may be filled by a man who is lethargic and desponding. For every man's character is twofold in its nature. There is for the one part a group of dispositions, tendencies and possibilities which is inherited, while another part consists of practices and opinions which are imitative and entirely due to the society in which he lives. The educator has to study the natural or hereditary dispositions of the child and work upon them with discrimination, repressing or modifying some, and encouraging others. Military training is like a steam roller, which passing over a stretch of ground makes an excellent road, but crushes out other virtue in the soil. The discipline of the educator is like the gardeners' craft, which takes into account the suitability of each plot of ground and the adaptability of it to varied purposes, and also the capacities and limitations of the plants which he proposes to cultivate.

A fault which arises from hereditary defect must be dealt with in a different way from one which arises through accidental or transitory circumstances. A fault which may lead to a bad habit must be dealt with in a different way from one which is a habit, and a fault which has become a second

nature must be dealt with in a different way from one which is a fault of nature. There are faults committed by the child, and there are faults in the child.

One child is untidy by natural disposition, another because no one has shown him how to be tidy. One child is cruel by disposition and torments his companions or dumb animals because of the unsympathetic hebetude of his nature; another is cruel through heedlessness and want of knowledge. Some are born cowards, and others are made cowards by the excessive timidity of those who train them. Some are born gluttons, and some are made greedy by mistaken kindness. Some are by nature deceitful and unreliable, others by mistaken approval of some chance art of deceit, which ended in a laughable incident to the amusement of their elders. Some children are by nature inattentive, others because they have never been trained to pay attention. As a rule, the mother is a better judge than the father of these distinctions, and her mistakes will be due rather to the heart than the understanding. Intellectual deficiency is not unfrequently due to some physical imperfection which has escaped notice, such as a slight defect in hearing, or in the sense of sight. The causes then of children's disobedience are manifold, and cases require very different treatment. Obedience, such as is the first duty of a soldier, is of a more limited description. Let us think for a moment more exactly of the nature of military obedience or the instinctive response of the muscles to the word of command, in other words, the discipline of parade. How quickly can an order be executed? The art of obedience to an order may be divided into three periods, which correspond to three operations of the nervous system. There are afferent nerves, or in-carrying nerves, which bring a stimulus from the skin to the brain, these set in motion some of the complicated nerve cells of the brain, and these, in their turn, stimulate the efferent nerve or nerves carrying nervous force outwards from the brain to the muscles. It is important to note this threefold division of nervous action, because from experiment it appears that while neither practice, nor training, nor education can do much to increase the speed of the action of the in-carrying or out-carrying nerves, they can do a great deal to enhance the rapidity with which the nervous force is discharged from the brain cells. The in-carrying nerves are often called sensory nerves, and the out-carrying nerves, motor nerves

The work of the brain is like an obstruction between the word of command received by the *sensory* nerve and the execution of the order by the *motor* nerve. The period during which the cells of the brain are doing their work is longer than the time needed for the action of the other two. Training, however, shortens the middle interval, while as I have said in respect of the other two, although they differ in different people, it does not appear that practice or training can do much to quicken their action. The time taken by the brain in receiving a word of command and converting it into the corresponding action can be shortened, mainly in one way, and that is by constant repetition or drill. That which tends to extend the time, is of course, such action of the brain as is connected with reflection or doubt or uncertainty of purpose. All that is characteristic of reasoning and consciousness must be eliminated if obedience to an order is to be as prompt as nerve and muscle can make it.

What is the least possible time in which a word of command can be heard and acted on—say the order, "Halt?"

Physiologists have reckoned that roughly speaking and on the average the sum of the three periods above described, viz., the period taken by the in-carrying or sensory nerve, the period taken by the nerve cells of the brain, and thirdly, the period taken by the out-carrying or motor nerves in their respective action, amounts in the aggregate to one sixth of a second. The ideal of drill, then, is that a soldier is able to act on an order within a sixth of a second of the utterance of it by the commanding officer. This then is the theory of "smartness." In military affairs this kind of smartness is pretty much confined to three or four sets of muscles, namely, those of the legs, feet, arms and hands, for these are the muscles concerned with marching and handling a rifle. It would appear that while in general education at least these muscles ought to be trained to prompt and perfect working, the training ought not to be limited to these as in military drill, but that every care should be taken to make a child prompt in all its movements. The power to carry out a command promptly is the basis of all obedience. Doubtless it is mechanical rather than moral or rational, but it may be regarded as a power which it is important to exercise and develop as a foundation for moral and rational obedience.

(To be continued.)